

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 398

By Watson

A RESOLUTION recognizing the individuals involved in the case  
of the disappearance of Kathleen Wrinkle.

WHEREAS, on February 22, 1956, Kathleen Wrinkle vanished, leaving her family and loved ones puzzled and grieving; and

WHEREAS, early that morning, before sunrise, Ms. Wrinkle, a twenty-six-year-old IBM operator at Central Services Company in Cleveland, left her apartment, apparently in search of a new job; and

WHEREAS, it is believed that she had an interview scheduled in Chattanooga; for some reason, though, Ms. Wrinkle apparently chose to travel east, taking Highway 64, then a narrow and treacherous roadway that almost certainly had no guardrails even though it tightly hugged the shore of Parksville Lake; and

WHEREAS, she may have been hoping to find work at a utility company in the copper country around Copperhill, in the southeast corner of the State where Georgia and North Carolina together meet Tennessee; whatever her motives were that morning, her eastward route would have been even more treacherous than the one travelers find today as they drive through that part of the picturesque Cherokee National Forest; and

WHEREAS, the weather that morning was cold, which may have caused some icing on Highway 64, and by the time Ms. Wrinkle reached Parksville Lake, the morning sun would have been up a bit; coming around that first tight bend of Highway 64, close to Ocoee Dam Number One, where the road suddenly claps to the shore of the lake, she might very well have been blinded by the sunlight; and

WHEREAS, Kathleen Wrinkle's fate would not be known to her family and friends for fifty-three more years; she would still be lost were it not for the persistent efforts of many

members of local and federal law enforcement, divers, emergency services providers, forensics specialists, an intrepid reporter, and Ms. Wrinkle's remaining family members; and

WHEREAS, roughly fifty years after Ms. Wrinkle vanished, *Cleveland Daily Banner* reporter Greg Kaylor received an e-mail from a Texas woman, Kim Callan, a distant cousin of Ms. Wrinkle's who had been contacting various agencies and organizations across the Eastern United States hoping to solve the mystery of Ms. Wrinkle's disappearance and perhaps some peace of mind; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Kaylor, his interest piqued, searched through his newspaper's archives and contacted Sergeant Bill Coultry of the Bradley County Sheriff's Department; Sergeant Coultry took an interest as well, and both men began to investigate the disappearance of Ms. Wrinkle, opening a case that had gone cold decades ago; and

WHEREAS, Sergeant Coultry and Mr. Kaylor visited Parksville Lake and worked to sketch out a dive grid that might allow searchers to begin the task of locating Ms. Wrinkle's vehicle; however, at that early stage of the newly reopened investigation, no one knew just what kind of car Ms. Wrinkle had driven that fateful morning; and

WHEREAS, then, on November 25, 2006, not long after the case had been reopened, the Sheriff's Department Sergeant was shot three times in the line of duty; and

WHEREAS, despite his injuries, Sergeant Coultry remained committed to the investigation of Ms. Wrinkle's disappearance; he volunteered many hours to the task and by January 2007, Sergeant Coultry had determined that Ms. Wrinkle owned a 1951 Chevrolet Bel Air; now, a search team would know just what kind of car to look for beneath the waters of Parksville Lake; and

WHEREAS, by the summer of 2007, the resources to mount an underwater search had been secured, but bad weather, as well as the difficulties inherent in an operation of this sort, slowed their efforts; moreover, once divers began their work, they discovered that vehicles and vehicle parts littered the western portion of Parksville Lake; and

WHEREAS, on September 21, 2007, divers Shaun Ashley, Shane Ashley, and Justin Miller discovered a submerged Chevrolet Bel Air, and they marked it by global positioning satellite to allow for further investigation; the Ashley brothers and Mr. Wilson contacted Benton

Police Department Detective Ken Ritenour, who gave his approval to their ongoing efforts and asked that the three keep him abreast of their activities; and

WHEREAS, on May 9, 2008, the three divers were able to retrieve a few scant remains from the vehicle, and they turned these over to the Benton Police Department; ultimately this evidence made its way to the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Forensics Laboratory in Quantico, Virginia, where examiners with the Bureau's DNA Analysis Unit provided vital support for the work of local investigators in Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, finally, on February 21, 2009, Ms. Wrinkle's niece, Evelyn Wrinkle Cross, and other family members were able to officially honor the life and mourn the untimely death of Kathleen Wrinkle at a memorial service in Cleveland, and the following day, the family held a graveside service at Hopewell Cemetery; and

WHEREAS, Kathleen Wrinkle's family would not have been able to put her to rest had it not been for the tireless efforts of so many, and all of the people involved in closing this cold case deserve the highest praise and sincerest thanks; and

WHEREAS, in addition to those already cited, many others were instrumental in solving the mystery of Ms. Wrinkle's disappearance: Sergeant John Eubanks, Retired, of the Cleveland Police Department; Chuck Burgess, of the Polk County Emergency Services; Benton Police Department Chief Rocky King; the FBI's National Missing Persons Unit; retired Kodak employees Ernie Boyd and Lee Mason; Cliff Frommer, photographic specialist with the Broward County Sheriff's Office Crime Scene Unit; Dr. Murray Marks, Associate Professor in the University of Tennessee (UT) Department of Anthropology; John Bethard, assistant to Dr. Marks; Dr. Darinka Mileusnic of the UT Department of Pathology; and all the people of the Benton Police Department, the Polk County Sheriff's Office, West Polk Fire and Rescue, and Bradley County Fire and Rescue; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SIXTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and commend the dedicated professionals and volunteers who worked so assiduously to solve the mystery of Kathleen Wrinkle's disappearance, thereby allowing her family to finally put her to rest after fifty-three years of uncertainty.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.